

# **Action Agenda 1999-2004**

## **What Independent Colleges and Universities Will Do To Advance Kentucky's Reform of Postsecondary Education**

**Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities  
484 Chenault Road  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601  
(502) 695-5007**

*For more information, see our Website: [www.aikcu.org](http://www.aikcu.org)*

### **Why is independent higher education important to Kentucky?**

- It offers a valued and unique alternative to public postsecondary education. Students live and learn in a values-rich environment and receive considerable individual attention. As graduates have shown, their academic experience equips them to be contributors and leaders in society and in the workplace.
- Independent colleges and universities are the state's lowest-cost providers of undergraduate four-year programs. Receiving no state subsidy and less than 2 percent of the overall postsecondary appropriation in the form of student financial aid, these institutions educate 23,000 students annually and award more than 20 percent of bachelor's degrees granted in Kentucky. They also provide more than \$80 million each year in self-generated financial aid while maintaining tuition well below the national average for independent institutions.
- Independent colleges and universities have the highest graduation rate (undergraduates, within six years of first enrolling) among postsecondary institutions in Kentucky. They also award a disproportionately large number of bachelor's degrees in areas critical to the Commonwealth's economic growth: biology (38 percent), math (25 percent), chemistry (28 percent), physics (36 percent), business (27 percent), and education (23 percent).

### **How will independent colleges and universities enroll, retain, and graduate more students?**

- Accelerated degrees, night and weekend colleges, and other nontraditional programs are being offered in growing numbers. The institutions are raising public awareness about the accessibility of independent higher education through collective marketing and expanded outreach to high schools and adult students. Academic requirements are being more closely aligned with those of secondary schools and state-supported institutions to ease the transition from high school and between postsecondary institutions.



- Independent colleges and universities are working together to control costs, remain competitive, and strengthen their ability to meet the state's goals. They are reducing operating costs through joint agreements and other arrangements with sister institutions. Business operations are being redesigned and streamlined. Campus leaders are exploring ways to share training, programs, and improvement of student services.
- Educating capable teachers and assisting practicing teachers and administrators – increasingly, through faculty-school partnerships – will continue to be a high priority. New opportunities will be sought to provide summer institutes and other professional development.
- Many independent colleges and universities can enroll more students. Several have reached enrollment limits, but others, collectively, can take an additional 3,500. A number of the institutions are willing to grow selectively and help the Commonwealth meet its goals for enrollment, retention, and graduation.

### **How can independent institutions work as partners with the state and the publics they serve to help Kentucky achieve its aspirations for 2020?**

- Financial barriers to higher education should be eliminated. The state's modest investment in the Kentucky Tuition Grant and College Access programs has allowed thousands of students, particularly in underserved areas, to go to college. Those programs also have saved taxpayers millions of dollars by encouraging enrollment in independent colleges and universities. Those institutions will encourage the state to invest more in those programs (and continually evaluate them) and will support the newly created Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarships, merit-based awards available to all students whether they attend public or independent institutions.
- The state should consider expanding fiscal partnerships with independent colleges and universities so that they can fully help Kentucky meet its ambitious education goals. These institutions, especially if teaming with the state or public colleges and universities, should be allowed to compete for targeted state money and be eligible for other financial incentives. Many states, recognizing that independent colleges educate citizens at low cost to taxpayers, are embracing this approach, which is buttressed by a growing body of judicial opinion.

### **How will independent colleges and universities know whether they have done what they say they will do?**

- They will have enrolled, retained, and graduated, in a timely manner, more students.
- They will have found new and ever more productive and efficient ways (including the Kentucky Commonwealth Virtual University) to work with each other and with public institutions to manage costs, improve services, and broaden academic offerings.
- They will have developed innovative partnerships with the Commonwealth to meet specific economic development and community needs.
- They will have measured the quality and effectiveness of their academic programs by monitoring pass rates on professional examinations, conducting satisfaction surveys of students, alumni, and parents, and tracking the job and graduate-school placement rates.